

First Peter 3:8-12
Christian living in the awe of God

Purpose: To persuade all believers to see the seriousness of living in awe of God

Introduction: We are still in the larger section of the letter that emphasizes God's grace being demonstrated in submission by those who live as foreigners in a hostile world for God's glory—2:11-4:11. What does that look like in everyday life?

- 1) Teaching for all believers—3:8a ⁸Finally [οὐ δέ τέλος], all [πάντες] of you^{pl} (the whole community of believers addressed in 2:11-3:7)
 - a) This is obviously not the end of the letter, but it is the end of the specific teaching started in 2:11.
- 2) What are the expectations for all believers?—3:8b-9a (should be)
 - a) Specific Christ-like attitudes TOWARD BELIEVERS—3:8b
 - ✓ Five foundational traits so that one may express what is taught in 3:9a
 - ✓ These are vital for maintaining all interpersonal relationships, including oneness in marriage
 - A shared **mindset**—*of one mind* [όμοφρων],—making schism unthinkable; unity of disposition/mindset, but not necessarily unity of opinion; cooperation when there are individual differences
 - Like Jesus (Philippians 2:5)
 - A shared **affection**—*full of sympathy* [συμπαθής],—readiness to enter into and share the feelings of others and to unite in either sorrow or joy
 - Like Jesus (Hebrews 4:15)
 - A shared **relationship**—*love as brothers* [φιλάδελφος],—enjoying your spiritual siblings (see 1:22)
 - Like Jesus (John 11:3, 36; 20:2)
 - (i) Believers are taught by God to do this (1st Thessalonians 4:9)
 - A shared **tenderness**—compassionate [εὔσπλαγχνος],—affectionately tender toward one another, the deepest of human emotions
 - Like God the Father (James 5:11) and God the Son (Matthew 9:36)
 - A sharing **mindset**—friendly [φιλόφρων],—courteous; hospitality is included
 - Some Greek texts read ταπεινόφρων
- b) Verbal self-control TOWARD UNBELIEVERS: non-retaliation in our speech—3:9a
 - i) Negatively—⁹not [μή] giving back [pres. act. ptc. as impv. ἀποδίδωμι]
 - (1) *evil* (in exchange) *for evil* [κακός ἀντί κακός]
 - (a) See also Romans 12:9-18; 1st Thessalonians 5:15
 - (b) Three options:
 - We can return evil for good, like Satan
 - We can return good for good and evil for evil, like most people
 - We can return good for evil, like Christ

(2) or [ἢ] *insults* (in exchange) *for insults* [λοιδορία ἀντί λοιδορία]

(a) Following the example of Jesus in 2:23

(3) The story is told of a Christian soldier living in the barracks with his unit. Each evening, when he would read his Bible and pray before sleeping, he was reviled and insulted by the soldier across the aisle. One night, a pair of muddy combat boots came flying at the Christian. The next morning, the hostile soldier found his boots at the foot of his bed, cleaned and polished and ready for inspection.

(4) Only by the Spirit of God producing self-control (Galatians 5:23)

ii) Positively—but on the contrary [τούναντίον δέ] *give a blessing* [pres. act. ptc. as impv. εὐλογέω],

(1) As Jesus taught in Matthew 5:38-42 & Luke 6:27-28

(2) As Stephen demonstrated in Acts 7:60

(3) Asking God to pour out grace on the unsaved person insulting us

(a) God gave us grace when we opposed Him, and we should ask Him to do the same for others

3) When are we to do this?—3:9b

a) *while knowing* [pf. act. ptc. εἰδῶ] *that* [ὅτι] *unto* [εἰς] *this* [οὗτος] *you^{pl} have been called* [aor. pass. ind. καλέω]

b) What is the “this” to which they were called?

i) Looking **back**—the normal use in 1st Peter (2:20-21; 4:6); refers to the previous teaching, i.e. because we too have received undeserved grace

ii) Yet looking **forward**—*in order that* [ἵνα] *you^{pl} may inherit* [aor. act. subj. κληρονομέω] *a blessing* [εὐλογία],

(1) As double descendants of Abraham

4) Old Testament passage illustrating what living in awe of God looks like—3:10-12

a) ¹⁰ *because* [γάρ], (Psalm 34:12-16; mostly LXX, with some correction from the Hebrew; this Psalm was already quoted in 2:3)

b) Who wants to live forever? “THE ONE WHO IS DESIRING [pres. act. ptc. θέλω] ...

i) TO BE LOVING [pres. act. inf. ἀγαπάω] LIFE [ζωή]

(1) Quality of life, not length of life

ii) AND TO SEE [aor. act. inf. ὁράω] GOOD DAYS [ἀγαθός ἡμέρα],

(1) A reference to eternal life

• Then, by God’s grace, obey these 5 commands.

c) What? 5 imperatives, indicating a 3-fold character true Christians possess

i) Have **verbal** integrity—① MUST RESTRAIN [aor. act. impv. παύω] (cf. 3:9)

(1) HIS TONGUE [γλώσσα] FROM [ἀπό] EVIL [κακός]

(2) AND HIS LIPS [χεῖλος] FROM SPEAKING [aor. act. inf. λαλέω] DECEPTION [δόλος];

ii) Have **moral** integrity—3:11a

(1) ¹¹ ② HE MUST TURN AWAY [aor. act. impv. ἐκκλίνω] FROM [ἀπό] EVIL [κακός]

(a) The rabbis counted 365 negative commands

(2) AND ③ DO [aor. act. impv. ποιέω] GOOD [ἀγαθός];
(a) The rabbis counted 248 positive commands
(b) Remember 2:15, 20; 3:6, 17

iii) Have **social** integrity—3:11b

(1) ④ HE MUST SEEK [aor. act. impv. ζητέω] PEACE [εἰρήνη]
(a) See Matthew 5:9

(2) AND ⑤ PURSUE [aor. act. impv. διώκω] IT [αὐτός],
(3) Not just being passively agreeable about peace, but actively pursuing peace.

d) Why is this three-fold integrity important? ¹² BECAUSE [ὅτι]... (NB that your view of God is your motivation)

i) Positively: God's habitual response to the **righteous**

(1) God's omniscience and provision—THE EYES [οφθαλμός] OF THE LORD [κύριος] (ARE) UPON [ἐπί] THE RIGHTEOUS ONES [δίκαιος]
(2) God's attentiveness and provision—AND HIS EARS [οὖς/ῶτα] UNTO [εἰς] THEIR REQUESTS [δέησις αὐτός]

ii) Negatively: God's habitual response to the **unrighteous**

(1) God's anger and opposition—BUT [δέ] THE FACE [πρόσωπον] OF THE LORD [κύριος] (IS) AGAINST [ἐπί] THE ONES CHARACTERIZED BY DOING [pres. act. ptc. ποιέω] EVIL [κακός].”

(2) Note that Peter stops before the final line of Psalm 34:16 which addresses the day of wrath and judgment.

5) Summary and applications

a) When faced with unjust insults and evil, Christians must decide whether to respond from the flesh and perpetuate strife, or to demonstrate the power of God's Spirit and grace through radically new conduct.

b) The person's characteristic choices in responding to others reveals whether they will be blessed by God (righteous) or be opposed by God (unrighteous).

c) Just as God delivered David in OT times (Psalm 34), and He delivered Peter's readers, so too He will deliver us in His time for His glory and our good.

6) **Take-home truth:** a God-transformed life is necessary to obtain the inheritance